

The Social Questions Bulletin

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THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE
(UNOFFICIAL)

An organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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DON'T BUY JAPANESE GOODS!

We urge our members to support and push the boycott against Japanese goods. This means first of all silk, and next the toys and notions found in ten-cent stores, department stores and small neighborhood shops. Some of these articles will be stamped "Made in Japan," others will not. So in buying toys, china and glassware, Christmas ornaments, electric light bulbs, tooth brushes and small metal articles it is necessary to ask where they were made.

Stop War

Silk is the key to the situation. We take 85% of the Japanese silk export; 97% of that is used in silk stockings. Without the foreign exchange she gets by selling her silk, Japan cannot finance her purchase of indispensable war materials abroad, some of which she is still buying in this country. Silk is the lifeline of the Japanese militarists. Cut this, and their plans cannot be carried out. This is our chance to defeat them without war. If this is not done, and they succeed in taking North China, its economic resources will make their war machine almost independent. This would add incalculable strength to the international fascist combine in its attack upon democratic procedure throughout the world.

These long-time consequences are not in the minds of many of the millions in this country and in England who are taking part in the boycott movement. This is one of the most spontaneous and significant popular awakenings of modern times. It is lining up labor with large middle-class forces, especially in the religious and education world. It is an expression of the saving grace of decency, justice and honesty, now almost lost to governments but widely present among the masses. Our task is to channel this force into constructive peace measures and prevent it from being used by the jingoists.

Passive Resistance

A people's refusal to buy Japanese goods is deeply different from government sanctions, in spirit, in method, and in consequences. It is the non-cooperation that Ghandi used against British cotton. It does not contain the same elements of

coercion and hypocrisy that are present in economic sanctions applied by some capitalist-imperialist powers against others. It has much more of the elements of passive resistance. It says to the Japanese people, "You cannot expect us to assist your treaty-breaking government to invade and conquer China. As soon as you get together and compel your government to withdraw its armed forces from Chinese soil, we will be glad to go on doing business with you."

The Long View

Of course, a boycott will hurt somebody. It will hurt Japanese workers, it will hurt American workers. The latter should be taken care of by a special unemployment insurance fund until the industry and the market are adapted to substitutes. For the former there is no present remedy, any more than there is for our own workers on relief until we remake our industrial order. The choice is between action that will hurt a few for their future good, and inaction that will hurt millions more indefinitely.

There are two safeguards against developing an anti-Japanese feeling that our own warmakers could use. One is to make it clear that it is Japanese aggression, not Japan, that we are acting against in our refusal to buy Japanese goods, in our willingness to wear substitutes for silk. The other is a clear and constant recognition of Japan's economic problem with an equally clear and constant affirmation of willingness to join our forces with those of the Japanese people in an effort to solve that problem as soon as their armed forces are withdrawn from China. Such affirmation is both sincere and intelligent when it



comes from a group like ours which knows that the profit economy has failed to solve the problem of human maintenance and which is carrying on an educational campaign in behalf of a workable and ethical substitute.

We also urge our members who support the boycott to support, morally and financially, the transport and shipping workers who refuse to handle any materials of war for Japan.

Revise Neutrality Act

The logic of these actions and the need of the situation compel a further position. It is not enough that our economic resources, whose weight in the long run will decide whether the world goes fascist or democratic, should be denied to the fascist aggressors. It is also necessary that they should be available to their victims. This means amending our neutrality legislation so that countries which are invaded can secure in our market the means of defense, under regulations which will keep such trade from involving us in war. We hope our members will add their voices to those demanding such action in the approaching special session of Congress.—H. F. W.

SAVE THE UNIONS!

Danger! I have just made a 6-weeks' trip to 14 of our Midwest Fall Conferences, where I discovered a serious situation. I found that a very effective campaign is being carried on for the incorporation of trade unions and for their regulation by governmental officials. In one of the Annual Conferences an amendment to the Social Service Report calling for such regulatory legislation was only averted by the quick action of one of our Federation members. There is a real danger that many of our middle-class church people will bring pressure to bear upon the members of Congress, at the coming special session, to enact legislation which will seriously cripple the American Labor Movement.

Pseudo-Fairness. I found that many persons are being convinced by the apparent fairness and justice of the arguments which are being advanced for the regulation and incorporation of the unions. Corporations are being compelled to incorporate, why not unions? Corporations are held responsible for their acts, why not unions? Arguments like these fail to make plain that Employers' Associations or Trade Associations are not compelled to incorporate. They do not bring out the fact that union members can be prosecuted under the criminal laws if they commit violence or destroy property. These arguments do not state that the officers and members of unions can be sued in the civil courts if they break their contracts or impair the property values of a business firm or corporation. Suits of this character have been

brought in the Michigan courts just this past month.

Breaking Strikes. Those who are urging the incorporation of unions do not tell us that if the members of a union go out on strike for living wages after incorporation takes place that an industrial spy or undercover operator in the pay of the employer can commit violence, ostensibly as a union member, and thus enable the employer to secure an injunction from a court tying up the union strike relief funds on the ground that the union has violated the articles of incorporation. At one time all the officers of a union in Lansing, Mich., were industrial spies.

The incorporation of trade unions would make it possible for the employers in the United States to break strikes that ought not to be broken if the working men and women are to have a fair opportunity to obtain living wages and decent working conditions through genuine collective bargaining. For this reason and for others which will be set forth in the next Research Number of the *Bulletin*, many Federation members are trying to block the drive for this repressive labor legislation.

Organize and Act! We will not play a significant rôle in the anti-fascist movement in the United States, however, unless we organize for action and act in our respective Annual Conferences, states, and in our nation. My recent trip through the Midwest has convinced me that the United Sessions of our Annual Conferences cannot be counted upon to stand vigorously for social justice in controversial economic situations. The official Social Service Committees, on the whole, do practically nothing during the year, and then at Conference time they bring in innocuous, milk-and-water reports. Ordinarily, whenever they make thorough-going recommendations challenging the status quo, such statements are either deleted or laid on the table. It is imperative that Federation members in each Annual Conference work for a Federation unit; that we organize Committees on Civil Liberties, Labor, and Social Legislation; that we assist one another in educating the people in our communities as to the dangers to our American democracy which are inherent in the proposals to incorporate and regulate the trade unions; that we help the workers, organized into unions of their own choice, to obtain signed collective agreements whereby they can secure living wages and decent working conditions.—C. C. W.

THE BATTLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Six weeks back from Spain, I am still under the aegis of the obligation imposed by what I saw and heard there. Loyalist Spain creates certain lasting impressions which cannot be gainsaid.

First, I put the "sober optimism" of a people who know their cause to be just

and have unshakable confidence both in the ultimate triumph of the principle of democracy and in their own unyielding determination to see it through.

Real Unity. Second, must be recognized the real unity of the United or Popular Front government which commands the loyalty of the overwhelming mass of the people in spite of minor defections.

Third, is conviction as to the sincerity of the basic social-revolutionary ideals that are making astonishing strides toward realization even in the midst of the most terrible and destructive war history has ever known. The largely voluntary collectivization of agriculture under the Negrín program is only one case in point and enthusiastic self-sacrificing peasant cooperation is one of the most inspiring reassurances of ultimate Loyalist victory.

Spirit and Mind. Fourth, the development of what are sometimes unrealistically referred to as spiritual and cultural values (but which after all, when genuine, are to be reckoned as high treasures of human life) goes on apace. Nominal religious services may be of necessity curtailed (though everywhere Protestant worship goes on uninterruptedly, since the Protestants have from the outset been staunch and unquestionable supporters of the Republic), but that is relatively insignificant in comparison with what is happening to the spirit and mind of man. The growing concern for the preservation of the children and the increasing tenderness and wisdom displayed in their care are manifestations of the religious principle alive in the hearts of Spanish men and women. The great impetus given to education by the war itself is evidenced by the enormous increase in educational propaganda and facilities: public schools carrying on "normally," adult education speeded up abnormally everywhere, in hospitals, prisons, even in the front-line trenches, where a system is employed whereby men can learn to read and write in less than three weeks' time. As to the character of what they are learning in this new literacy campaign, I submit the following specimen copy set for a writing lesson, which I myself took from a blackboard in one of the "Militia of Culture" schools in Madrid:

"The Moors who are at the front do not know that they are fighting against authentic Revolutionary Spain. The Anti-Fascist Spanish-Moorish Federation will teach them this truth. Proletarians, help us. Respect Moorish prisoners." Good Christian forgive-your-enemies doctrine, it would seem.

Read, Think, Act. I have recently in Pittsburgh debated with a priest who found such arguments as those contained in the pamphlets of the Spanish section of our "Pamphlet Recommendations" hard to answer. If you need arguments like these, send for the pamphlets. Read, too, Gannes

and Repard, Langdon-Davies' "Behind Spanish Barricades" and Elliot Paul's "Life and Death of a Spanish Town."

But to read is not enough. Examine "non-intervention" and "neutrality" carefully. See how specious, how hypocritical, how essentially fascist, in the last analysis, they are, definitely helping as they do Italy and Germany to win *their* war on Spanish soil. Make your influence felt—somehow—to bring to an end such contradictions. Join some group where you can make your efforts count (I suggest, for example, the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy.) Read, ponder, listen, discuss—and then act. Spain is fighting the battle not simply of Spanish but of world democracy. We cannot stand aside.—H. G. M.

FROM THE FIELD

During his trip to the Midwest Fall Conferences C. C. W. was introduced by Bishops Magee, Smith, Oxnam, Hughes, Mead and Richardson and addressed the United Session of six, and the Annual Session of two, Conferences. He spoke at eleven Federation luncheons and three dinners.

Both—and, Either—or? The lay delegates to the Rock River Conference in their session adopted a resolution recommending that pastors devote "the principal part of their time" to furthering spirituality among church members and spend less time dealing with social and economic questions. Some of the laymen contended that spirituality and social and economic problems overlapped, but they were in the minority.

District Superintendents Speak Out. The five district superintendents of the Rock River Conference, in their annual report, commended pastors for their participation in the settlement of labor disputes, and declared "it is the duty of the church to speak with authority upon all moral and ethical questions."

Chicago Memorial Day Tragedy. The Rock River United Session deleted the reference to the Chicago Memorial Day tragedy from the report of the Conference Commission on Citizenship. The report condemned violence in labor disputes, irrespective of whether committed by labor or by representatives of corporations. It seems that to mention a concrete example within the conference area is to commit Amos' crime of dealing with home conditions. The Chicago Memorial Day Massacre must be taboo. Why?

However, the Rock River Federation Unit adopted a resolution "deplored" the killing of ten persons during the Memorial Day outbreak at South Chicago ("In all the investigations of this tragedy we cannot find any good reason why anyone should have been shot") and condemning as inexcusable the part played by the steel corporation.

This illustrates one function and value of a separate Conference Federation Unit: it can say what needs to be said when the Conference itself is—somehow—inhibited from saying it.

Who's Who? The United Session of the Wisconsin Conference when confronted with an endorsement of the Consumers' Cooperative Movement in the report of its Social Service Committee ordered the endorsement deleted. Concern for the economic security of the small business man apparently was paramount. What is the proportion of business owners and working men on our official boards?

C. I. O. The Federation's former Secretary and faithful member, Al Heist, is now Director of Education and Public Relations for Southern California for the C. I. O.

"Opened with Prayer." C. C. W. was asked to open a C. I. O. Union meeting in Kansas City, Mo., with prayer, and—after addressing the union—to close the meeting with a benediction. If all C. I. O. members are Communists(?) apparently all Communists are not atheists.

Note to the Field. Use our office files. This is a service which has necessarily been discontinued since Miss Chappell's leaving and which of course can only gradually be built up again. But if you will be patient with our present limitations we will do our best to help supply you with the current materials needed to treat current issues.

FROM OUR MAIL BAG

October Bulletin. Your statements regarding Church and State are the best I have seen anywhere. The one on Germany interested me most. I lived there about 16 years and from personal experience and observation I can state that your deductions are very accurate and fair, taking into account the longstanding social apathy of the State Churches.—*A. S., Wisc.*

A Test Church. It is my passion to carry Grace Church through these very sensitive days on a basis which will have the respect of the radical groups. This is increasingly difficult, because every issue has its repercussions of a more or less violent nature. Every time we allow meetings on the Spanish issue, for instance, we take our future in our hands, but when there is no other place to meet we assume that it is our obligation to accept the challenge of free speech and assembly. I am trying to prove that it can be done in at least one church in each average size city.—*Edgar M. Wahlberg, Denver.*

Red Baiting. Can some means be made available for making the Federation a clearing-house for information regarding the various types of conservative-propaganda organizations which are springing

up over the country? If I can keep up to date on this information I can ward off many a blow that would be struck when these sources are quoted.—*Wisc.* (Write in! —*H. G. M.*)

COMING EVENTS

People's Congress for Democracy and Peace—Fourth American Congress of the American League, to be held in Pittsburgh, November 26th to 28th. Write American League Against War and Fascism, 268—4th Ave., New York.

M.F.S.S. Eastern Regional Conference—(December 3-4, Union Theological Seminary) Theme: "What We're Up Against," Friday, p. m., Niebuhr on "Christianity's Stake in the Struggle Between Fascism and Democracy"; Friday evening, Bishop McConnell; Saturday, a. m., Luccock on "Present Wave of Reaction in the Churches"; Saturday, p. m., H. F. W. on "Can We Be Neutral?"

George Lackland writes: "I feel the present need for a technique for meeting the growing tensions that are developing in both churches and communities. At least half the attention of the conference should be given to this, rather than to the theoretical side of the question. *Men are on the firing line today in social issues as I have never known them to be before.*"

Come and force the Conference to face real issues realistically.

PAMPHLET RECOMMENDATIONS

Should Labor Unions Be Regulated? (Congregational Social Action, 289—4th Ave., N. Y., 10c)
Consider the Laundry Workers (League of Women Shoppers, 220—5th Ave., N. Y., 10c)
Consumers' Cooperation (Harry Laidler, League Ind. Dem., 112 E. 19th St., N. Y., 15c)
Photo History No. 2, Labor's Challenge (155 E. 44th St., New York, 25c)
Japanese Boycott (In preparation, Amer. League Against War and Fascism, 268—4th Ave., New York, 5c)
Catholics Speak for Spain, and Catholics & Civil War in Spain (North Amer. Comm. Aid Spanish Dem., 381—4th Ave., New York, 5c each)
Foreign Policy Reports on Spain, Jan. 1 and 15, 1937 (F. P. A., 8 W. 40th St., New York, 25c each)

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Dombrowski: Early Days of Christian Socialism (Columbia University, \$2.50)
Bennet: Social Salvation (Scribner's, \$2.)
Luccock: Christianity & Economic Change (Meth. Book Concern, \$2.)
Symposium: Christianity & the Social Revolution (Scribner's, \$3.)
Symposium (Canadian): Toward the Christian Revolution (Willett-Clark, \$2.)
Huberman: Man's Wordly Goods (Harper's, \$2.50)
Modern Age Books (155 E. 44 St., N. Y. C.): Men Who Lead Labor; The Labor Spy Racket (35c a vol.)
Editors of Fortune: Backgrounds of War (Knopf, \$2.50)
Tanin & Yonin: When Japan Goes to War (Int'l Publishers, 98c)
Gannes & Repard: Spain in Revolt (Knopf, \$2.)

SPECIAL RECOMMENDATION

Religion & Public Affairs (MacMillan), the "McConnell Symposium," edited by Prof. Rall and published November 16. Should prove of unique value to our entire membership. The Federation can offer it—if ordered through us—at \$2. Send your order in today.